

Summer Institute on Theology and Disability 2017
Azusa Pacific University in Collaboration with Fuller Theological Seminary
Afternoon Classes and Workshops

Ph.D. Symposium: All afternoon, Tuesday through Thursday. Led by Dr. Hans Reinders along with other Summer Institute faculty. The course provides PhD students in the field of theology and disability to present and discuss their research with peers and faculty. There are 8 student presentation slots available. The course will also offer 2 lectures by SITD faculty members. The course is open for auditors to sit in. No additional costs, but participants must be approved by Dr. Reinders. Email: j.s.reinders@vu.nl

Workshops: These are organized by general theme as on the summary title and theme chart, not by day, except for the two-day course immediately below. The schedule will be available in April.

Scripture and Disability

Chabad Course: Toward Inclusion (Monday and Tuesday afternoons)

Inclusion as a movement advocates for the opportunity for all people to fully participate in society. While there has been much progress on eliminating the historical marginalization of people with disabilities, our communities still have much work to do to create welcoming spaces for all people. People with disabilities still experience many types of barriers, physical and architectural as well as attitudinal and cultural, to their full participation as equal and valued members of our communities.

The Rohr Jewish Learning Institute course, *Toward Inclusion*, is predicated on the understanding that real and enduring societal change is achieved by transforming individual minds and hearts. The course draws on sources from psychology, classic Jewish teachings from Jewish scholars and authors through the ages, legal theory and social science, as well as, first-person accounts from individuals with disabilities—to explore the limits of our own perception, the inherent dignity of humanity, social responsibility, and the importance of ethical practice. An exploration of these theories and studies, and an examination of how they can be applied in our daily interactions with others, will hopefully serve to develop and nurture true and enduring inclusion in our communities

Course leader: **Rabbi Chaim Hanoka.**

Disabling/Enabling Utopias

Prophetic Utopian Visions which refer to disability are powerfully emotive and highly charged texts. Stating that disability will either remain or be discarded in an idealized future, they provide insight into the author's conception of harm and hope. This presentation will focus on

Isaiah 35 and Jeremiah 31, considering how two related texts approach disability in radically different ways. I will refer to historical and contemporary exegesis of these texts, both by people with and without an interest in disability, and link the texts to their canonical contexts. Participants will be given the opportunity to discuss their feelings around the texts, and consider how these texts might be best preached and practiced.

Presenter: Kirsty Jones is a research associate with the Kirby Laing Institute for Christian Ethics. She has recently completed her MPhil in Old Testament at the University of Cambridge, with a research interest in Disability in the Old Testament and Biblical Ethics of Disability. Her thesis, 'Inclusion in the Prophetic Utopian Visions', investigates the role of inclusion of individuals with disabilities within Isaiah and Jeremiah, and the implication of healing/non-healing tropes within the wider biblical text. She has also investigated multi-sensory language in the Psalter and its impact on understanding cognitive-emotive approaches to worship and revelation, within the text of the Bible and practice of the Church.

Theology and Disability

Language and Silence in the Context of Non-verbal Autism: A Theological Exploration

Arguably divine inspiration provides purpose and meaning to the life of someone with severe disability, implying that they may be the recipients of spiritual experiences that are specific to their life circumstance. Theological consideration pertaining to the necessity of language for spiritual experience and expression is significant to those who are unable to speak such as people with non-verbal autism. The spiritual journey of the Apostle Paul who met Christ through an affliction, indicated that God's grace is often experienced through human weakness. People express and understand experience using language, meaning that it is only the linguistic representations of an experience that can be studied, rather than the experience itself. This presentation argues that people with non-verbal autism are likely to experience profound spiritual experiences, regardless of the linguistic capabilities to express these experiences verbally.

Presenter: Mrs. Karenne Hills is the Undergraduate Counselling Course Coordinator in the School of Social Sciences at Christian Heritage College. She is a Ph.D. candidate at Griffith University, studying the spiritual experiences of people with non-verbal autism. She has a special interest in the theological and spiritual considerations for people with disability, an interest born largely out of her personal journey with her two sons, each of whom live with significant disabilities. Her research interests include: The spiritual experiences of people with non-verbal autism, sexuality and spirituality, sexuality for people with disability and alternative learning opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities.

Black Liberation Theology of Disability in an Age of Terror

Undoubtedly, we live in an Age of Terror: of political, social, and ableist violence. Black men and women are killed in the streets, progressive political measures are under scrutiny, and those

with disabilities are constantly underserved and ignored as secondary citizens. Black Liberation Theology of Disabilities could help us understand our present situation and learn how to fight against it. It is first and foremost a way of life grounded in a theological framework. It encompasses black persons living with disabilities and focuses on their social, spiritual, and economic needs. It seeks to transform society to embrace black persons living with disabilities as an important part in the fabric of society and supports those already doing the work. Finally, it understands a God who is disabled, who is paralyzed by the cross. Still, God is not indifferent to suffering and is in solidarity with the marginalized. In this way, Black Liberation Theology of Disabilities can help us keep our soul intact, without compromising our morals.

Presenter: Kendrick Arthur Kemp was raised in Upstate NY, Lyons. He earned a Masters of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary in NYC and an MSW from Binghamton University. Kendrick was the founding member and co-chair of the Disability Justice Caucus at Union and an active member of ADAPT: a national grass-roots organization promoting disability rights. While at Union, Kendrick was mentored by Dr. James Cone, the founder of Black Liberation Theology. Out of the depths of theological wisdom, Kendrick constructed Black Liberation Theology of Disability. Kendrick also enjoys reading, listening to spirituals, and having critical conversations about race and disabilities.

Disabled access to the cross?... the missing conversation between disability theology and the death and resurrection of Jesus.

We typically use language of sacrifice, justice, or victory to express our understanding of the Atonement (the cross and resurrection of Jesus) and of what God was achieving through it. In what ways is that language and understanding challenged by the insights of disability theology? At the same time, if this Atonement is fundamental to Christian faith, does it play a big enough part in our disability theology? The presentation will suggest that much is missing on both sides of this conversation. It will explore how our current disability theology and our understanding of the cross and resurrection might each be significantly enriched by the other.

Presenter: Rev. David McLachlan lives south of London in the UK with his wife, Mary. David worked in finance for 17 years before a call to full-time pastoral ministry. More recently he has returned to Spurgeons' College, where he trained for ministry, to teach and to undertake research in disability theology (a Master's degree and now a PhD with Manchester University). David is a governor of Young Epilepsy, a UK national centre for young people with severe epilepsy and related neurological conditions.

Disability Justice Meets Religious Communities: An exploration of the place and importance a disability justice framework has within a religious or faith-based context

This presentation will begin with an exploration of the notion of disability justice as compared with and contrasted to the more prevalent frame of disability rights. We will then explore the significance applying a disability justice analysis would have on the religious community or

congregation, including in how access is conceptualized, issues of language usage and will conclude with an exploration of the theological underpinnings for such a frame.

Presenter: Lauren Tuchman is a rabbinical student at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. During the 2016-2017 academic year, she is serving as the rabbinic intern at T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights. She is passionate about bringing disability rights and justice perspectives to bear on religious and spiritual communities out of a firmly held belief that people with disabilities have spiritual insights that are too often not brought to the larger table of religious discourse. She has written and taught widely on the intersection of Judaism and disability justice, including the Summer Institute on Theology and Disability, the National Havurah Committee, the Jewish Theological Seminary and has served as a scholar in residence at synagogues and other Jewish organizations around the country. She has been published in the Journal of Interreligious Studies, State of Formation, Jewschool, RitualWell and Hayidion: The Ravsak journal for day school educators. Lauren holds a BA in religion and Judaic studies from Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA and an MA in Judaic Studies from the Jewish Theological Seminary.

'Variability' Theology: Grafting God's 'Very Good' to the Tree of 'Disability' Theology

Recognizing limitations are imposed on people by the label 'disability' and affirming God's having declared all of creation very good, introducing the new word 'variabilities' acknowledges difference without disparagement and liberates individuals to become who God created them to be.

Presenter: Carrie Mitchell is a person, partner, parent and pastor joyously serving the First Presbyterian Church of Pittsford for fifteen years. Prior to acknowledging her call to ministry, Carrie promoted international exports in the public and private sectors and lobbied U.S. and foreign governments for favorable regulations. When the Mitchells learned of their eldest child's diagnosis of autism at 26 months, they embarked upon an unexpected 'growth opportunity' and seek to make that journey less anxious for other individuals and families. Carrie enjoys being a child of God with her family, faith community, local school district, Scouts, dojo, artistic and musical theater community.

Recovering Christian Charity: Is There Reason to Do This?

For many disability advocates, "charity" has become a dirty word. After decades of representing persons with disabilities as objects to be pitied and helped only from a distance, disability charities have become associated with sentimentality at best and dehumanization at worse. This new understanding of "charity," however, is far from its original use in the Christian tradition. This workshop describes how this happened and offers possibilities for recovering the traditional understanding of charity within the church and its impact on the intersection of disability and churches, relative to charitable activity and participation.

Presenters: **Devan Stahl** is an Assistant Professor of Clinical Ethics at Michigan State University. Dr. Stahl teaches medical ethics and medical humanities in the College of Human Medicine and performs clinical ethics consultation services throughout the state of Michigan. Dr. Stahl's main areas of research are in disability ethics, religion and spirituality in healthcare, and clinical ethics. Devan earned her Ph.D. in Health Care Ethics at Saint Louis University and her M.Div. at Vanderbilt University. **Anne Masters** is Director for Pastoral Ministry with Persons with Disabilities for the Catholic Archdiocese of Newark, a member of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD) Council on I/DD; a writer and contributor to *Our Sunday Visitor*; a Fellow of the American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) and past president of its Religion & Spirituality Division. She has presented throughout the US and at the Vatican on theology, disability and pastoral practice. Anne is a PhD student in Theology at Vrije Amsterdam University and earned her M.A. in Theology at the College of Saint Elizabeth.

Moving Beyond and Us and Them Theology: An Encore

More than ever, we need to assert that there is no place for "us" and "them" in the community of faith. Continuing the dialogue we started in 2016, but offering specific tools and practice in using them, we address the need for an inclusive theology of disability that doesn't use "us" and "them" to differentiate between people who have disabilities and those who do not. We want to revisit what we learned from last year's Institute, and develop best practice guidelines that we can all apply. Learning to avoid language that marginalizes or "others" people with disabilities is new to many writers and speakers with and without disabilities. This workshop will help new and returning participants analyze writing samples from recent disability theology. Drawing on insights from Nancy Eiesland's *The Disabled God*, participants will examine texts to determine who is in the speaking center. We will illustrate examples of inclusive writing. If needed to eliminate hidden ableism we will brainstorm how the wording might be altered in a way that validates all listeners and readers. The outcome of this encore session will be to generate a cutting-edge tool and action steps that can guide our practice moving forward.

Presenters: **Lynn Swedberg MS, OTR/L, FAOTA**, is Disability Consultant for the Disability Ministries Committee of The United Methodist Church and editor of the Committee newsletter *The Voice of the UM Disability Connection*. She is also an occupational therapist with adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Her passion is facilitating accessibility and inclusion in faith communities, faith-based camps, meetings, and public facilities. She is from Spokane, WA, where she serves on her church's Inclusivity Committee, her conference disability committee, and the Spokane County Accessible Communities Advisory Committee. She is finishing certification in Disability Ministries and is a deaconess candidate. **The Reverend Lisa Lavelle McKee** is an Elder in the West Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. She holds a Master of Divinity from Wesley Theological Seminary. Lisa has served as a pastor, community educator, and job coach for individuals with disabilities, a camp counselor, nursing home activities director, and a hospital chaplain. Lisa's work as well as her personal experience with disability gives her unique perspective on living a faithful and fruitful life. Lisa

resides in Summersville, WV with her husband John, who is also a pastor, and Chloe, a spoiled Welsh Corgi.

Dissolving Boundaries': Threshold Concepts Within Disability Theology

This paper focuses on an analysis of threshold concepts within disability theology. It is based on a recently published journal article in the *Journal of Adult Theological Education* (13, 2: 2016) by the researcher and his colleague. It explores a range of ideas linked to threshold concepts and the experience of people living with a disability. The world in which Christian parishioners encounter people living with disability (the focus of this paper), could be described as a 'liquid world' which is fuzzy, uncertain, unstable and marked by 'dissolving boundaries' (Barnett, R. 2012). The researcher argues that, despite such boundaries, or perhaps because of them, certain thresholds need to be crossed by members of faith communities for a person living with disability to feel as if he/she genuinely belongs to a community. The three interrelated thresholds examined within this paper are — empowerment, hospitality and neighbourliness. Finally, the paper considers some relevant, practical responses by churches so that people living with disability feel that they genuinely belong to their community.

Presenters: Zachariah Duke recently completed his doctorate titled: 'A critical analysis of a theology of disability in the Australian Catholic Church: a qualitative inquiry of contemporary inclusionary practices'. Zachariah's main areas of research are: practical theology, disability theology and ecclesiology and ethnography. Zachariah lectures in Theology at BBI – The Australian Institute of Theological Education and is an active member several academic and professional associations, including Living Fully, the Association for Practical Theology in Oceania and the Australian Catholic Theological Association.

The Mouth of a Labyrinth: Beauty, Theology, and Disability Justice

Theologian Simone Weil once described the beauty of the world as "the mouth of a labyrinth." With this analogy, she imagines beauty as God's way of both attracting and confusing us, as well transforming us and teaching us about love. In *Staring: How We Look* disability studies scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson makes a case for the transformative role of beauty in the work of disability justice. Disabled activists who perform "rare beauty" are catalysts for the transformation of human perception. In this workshop, we consider beauty's relevance to theology, disability, and relationships with God and others. Why should beauty as a concept matter to theology? How might beauty relate to other moral emphases—such as justice or love? We will briefly explore the challenges and possibilities of beauty as a theological lens, both by drawing on participants' own experiences as well as using Weil, Garland-Thomson, and other disability scholars and theologians.

Presenter: Dr. Rebecca F. Spurrier is Associate Dean for Worship Life and Assistant Professor of Worship at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, GA. She graduated with an MDiv from Candler School of Theology and a PhD from Emory University's Graduate Division of Religion. She is interested in a theology and practice of public worship that reflects the beauty and tension human difference brings to Christian liturgy. Engaging disability studies, ethnographic

theology, and theological aesthetics, her research explores the hope and creativity of interdependence and the importance of access for Christian community.

Practical Theology

“Befriending the Stranger at the Boundaries of Disability: Seeing the Disorientation of a Person with a Food Related Disability.”

Disabilities are often defined medically or socially. Within the disability community, even though it is rightly discouraged, there is a social hierarchy that can at times create boundaries and feelings of exclusion, which leads to marginalization. This is particularly true for those whose disability is either difficult to be self-advocated (ex. those with intellectual disabilities) or is in question (ex. those with food related disabilities) because they are at the extremities of that hierarchy. People with food related disabilities live at these boundaries. They long to be genuinely seen and known. At this workshop, I will explore how to see the disorientation of those with food related disabilities in order to join with them in the work of reorientation, especially within the church.

Presenter: Rev. Tony Stiff has been in ministry for 18 years in different congregations across the United States of America (Philadelphia, Atlanta, Tampa, and presently in the Sacramento area). He has a MDiv in Urban Missiology from Westminster Theological Seminary, and is in his last year of completing a Doctor of Ministry degree at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, MI in Practical Theology. Esophageal disabilities have touched Rev. Tony Stiff’s life personally through his five-year-old son who was diagnosed with eosinophilic esophagitis in 2011. Since that time, the Stiff family have been exploring normalcy at the boundaries of the disability community with Liam.

The Pursuit of Unity in Diversity across Church in Australia, India and Papua New Guinea.

The Luke14 initiative commenced development in 2008 and now includes a guide to inclusive churches, a Bible study, Church Bar None, resources for a Disability Awareness Sunday and five half-day workshops for churches. After 7 years of implementation, the Luke14 resources have been used extensively in Australia, applied in India and recently introduced to Papua New Guinea. This paper recounts some of the ways in which doors are opened and closed experienced in the implementation of this initiative across different cultures, both national cultures and denominational cultures.

Presenters: Rob Nicholls is the Church Engagement Manager at CBM Australia. Part of his work is networking and training for the Luke14 initiative. **Belinda Bayak-Bush** is the Disability Inclusion Advisor in the Inclusive Development Department at CBM.

The Beloved Community

East Rochester United Methodist Church is a small congregation in a suburb of a medium sized city. They received a new pastor in 2013 who gently nudged them towards becoming a missional congregation that embodies the love and acceptance of Jesus towards all members of the community. Many of the members of the aging congregation had limited personal relationship with people with disabilities. That changed when they welcomed a man who needed their community as much as they needed him. His sense of humor, sense of rightness, and desire to belong was their introduction to possibilities. One of their missional outreaches was to invite a day habilitation program for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities to share available space in their building. However, they did not want this relationship to be defined as landlord/tenant. Both parties wanted genuine relationships. My presentation will discuss the sometimes rocky road that all parties involved have been willing to journey on together as they seek to truly be a loving community of faith.

Presenter: Lida Merrill serves as the Director of Faith Community Inclusion team at Heritage Christian Services. Her team focuses on the spiritual needs of people through supporting them as they seek meaningful inclusion into local faith communities, and providing training and supports to employees. She also serves as a resource for local faith community leaders as they welcome people with varying abilities. Lida is a graduate of Northeastern Seminary at Roberts Wesleyan College and has a Masters of Theology degree. **Todd Goddard** is an ordained clergyman in the United Methodist Church, serving churches in the Finger Lakes region of New York since ordination in 1986. He is currently pastor of East Rochester UMC. He earned a B.S. in Mathematics from Elmira College and a M.Div. from United Theological Seminary. With his wife, Cynthia, they have two sons, the youngest, Christian, on the Autism Spectrum. Todd has worked as a part time Psychiatric Assessment Officer and as a volunteer EMT. Todd currently serves on the Board of Wayne ARC, Rochester Presbyterian Home, Finger Lakes Addiction Counseling and Referral Agency, and Genesee Area Campus Ministry.

Supporting Siblings and Families of People with Disabilities in Faith Communities

While much time and thought may be put into including people with disabilities, oftentimes family members, including siblings, are not specifically supported. Siblings of people with disabilities, who have the longest lasting relationships, are often the least supported by professionals and faith communities in day-to-day life. Faith communities are uniquely positioned to have a role as leaders in supporting families of people with disabilities. This interactive workshop will equip faith communities to be more strategic in supporting families of people with disabilities. Consideration will be given to the following objectives: 1) practical ways to support siblings in faith communities; 2) practical ways to support family members in faith communities; and 3) strategies that faith communities can take to ensure they are supporting whole families of people with disabilities.

Presenters: Anna Brady is a Ph.D. student at Utah State University and holds a Master's degree in Special Education. Anna has two brothers with various disabilities. Her research interests include interventions to increase people with disabilities' independence, as well as roles of

adult siblings of people with disabilities. She has worked with people with all ages and types of disabilities in school, recreation, home, and work settings. **Catherine Webb** is a Ph.D. candidate in Disability Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago and holds a Master's degree in Speech-Language Pathology. Her research interest is in the intersection of disability and religion, specifically in ministerial training. She is a sibling of two sisters who have mental health needs and has a disability herself. Ms. Webb has been actively involved in ministry for, with, and by people with disabilities in a variety of settings including: churches, summer camps, international outreaches, and local respite programs.

“Forgetting the Former Things: Brain Injury and the Church”

God offers this invitation and promise through the prophet Isaiah: “Do not remember the former things...I am about to do a new thing” (43:18-19). Drawing on the double meaning of this imagery for brain injury survivors, this workshop will explore the challenges of coping with memory loss and other diminished capacities while letting go of life as it once was and accepting a new reality. It is designed for pastors, persons with brain injuries, their care partners and allies. Rapidly increasing dementia in our aging population and a spike in traumatic war wounds have put this issue in the national spotlight. We'll examine growing edges for the church in understanding and embracing the gifts of members who have a disability that often seems “hidden” and cannot be addressed with an elevator or wheelchair ramp. Time will be provided for sharing personal experiences and discussion.

Presenters: Tamara Puffer is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church USA who had to re-imagine her life after sustaining a traumatic brain injury in a car accident in 1996. She is collaborating with **Joyce Hollyday**, a United Church of Christ pastor, author, and former editor of *Sojourners* magazine, to write a book on theology and brain injury, funded by a grant from the Lilly Endowment's Louisville Institute. Tamara is active in Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church and Circle of Mercy congregation in Asheville, NC, where Joyce is a founding co-pastor.

A Call for Education Reform in Christian Schools

Does biblical justice include people with disabilities? Like the orphan and widow of Christ's day, people with disability have historically been marginalized, frequently experiencing poverty and isolation. A biblical worldview of disability and a Christian community, which seeks the mind of Christ, ought to challenge the exclusion and injustices people with disability experience in our communities. This presentation will interweave the author's personal experience as a Christian member of the disability community, disability studies scholarship, and a biblical worldview of disability to examine the current practice of excluding people with disabilities from Christian school education. The goal is to examine our societal biases and practices and respond to people with disabilities in a manner that is pleasing to Christ Jesus and to work toward reform within Christian schools in order to actively include people with disabilities.

Presenter: Tammy Bachrach is a graduate of Biola University and a doctoral student at Chapman University seeking a PhD in education with an emphasis in Disability Studies. She has grown up in the disability community as the daughter and sister of individuals with intellectual

disabilities. She has been a general and special educator for over 20 years, working with both primary and secondary students with disabilities. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Education at Azusa Pacific University. Her passion is bridging the gap between disability studies, the Church and Christian Education.

Practice-centered Youth Ministry: An Inclusive Approach to Youth Ministry

This workshop considers the possibilities of a practice-centered approach to youth ministry. This approach, which is particularly effective for including the contributions and gifts of young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in congregational life, is also, simply put, a better way to do youth ministry. It shifts the focus of youth ministry from an emphasis on creating and maintaining programs to an emphasis on developing relationships and participating in everyday life together. The workshop will include time for discussion and questions.

Presenter: Ben Conner is Professor of Practical Theology and the Director of the Graduate Certificate in Disability and Ministry at Western Theological Seminary. He has written the only book to date on youth ministry with adolescents with disabilities, *Amplifying Our Witness* (Eerdmans, 2012). He is also a youth ministry veteran with 20 years of experience, having served seven years as Capernaum staff (Young Life's work with young people with disabilities). He now serves on the Young Life Capernaum Mission-Wide Board and is on the Advisory Board of Friendship House Partners.

Pastoral Care and Counseling Response to Children with Developmental Disability in Africa: The Nigerian Situation

This workshop introduces participants to the increasing challenges or growing awareness of the impact of developmental disability on an African child, families and the society, and the possible Pastoral care initiatives that could be undertaken to address these challenges. It presents the causes, the challenges confronting children with disability about their person hood, family, and their community; and reflects, seeks and explores possible ways in which Churches and Church Pastors with various disability related organizations, individuals, professionals and experts might work together to promote, construct and deconstruct various realities in the lives of children with developmental disability in Africa.

Presenter: Olutayo Stephen Shodipo is a Nigerian Baptist minister with years of experience in Pastoral care and counseling and Educational ministry. He is currently on his Doctor of Ministry, researching on "The possibilities of incorporating spirituality into therapeutic process for persons with developmental disability" at St Stephen's College, University of Alberta, Canada. He is married with three children.

Utilizing Online Resources to Support Individuals with Disabilities in Accessing Their Faith

Devoted Sunday Schools teachers are often willing to help, but have feelings of self-doubt and anxiety. These feelings can be felt at a greater magnitude when a volunteer's class includes a student with a disability. Without specific training on how to accommodate the learner's needs, both the teacher's and student's ability to be edified can be compromised. This presentation will enlighten the audience about online resources that are already available and the process of organizing training content; enabling them to create resources needed in their communities and congregations. The presenters will share the website entitled "Reaching the One" (<http://education.byu.edu/disabilities>) that provides families and congregations with a variety of sources to use in helping those with disabilities. A new teacher training video for religious educators has also been produced by the presenters and will be shared during the presentation and shared for public domain. After looking at what is already available, the presenters will share the thought process behind creating online aides and training. By the end of the workshop attendees will leave with more resources to help train church volunteers working alongside those with disabilities and understand how to institute their own resources.

Presenters: **Katie Steed**, an Associate Clinical Professor at the McKay School of Education at Brigham Young University since 2003. Her Master of Science Degree was completed with a thesis entitled: Instructing teachers of children with disabilities within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Along with presenting this topic among churches of all faiths, she has also traveled with Church Humanitarian Missions as a Technical Specialist for LDS Charities to Albania and Guyana conducting trainings concerning working with children with special needs. **Mary Woodruff** is an undergraduate student at Brigham Young University studying Special Education with emphasis in severe disability.

Advocacy and Leadership

Flipping the Tables: Self/Advocacy in Inaccessible Faith Spaces

For many involved in churches/faith communities, their intentions towards inclusivity are overshadowed by committees, budget constraints, bureaucracy, and a communal unwillingness to address issues. This presentation will focus on effective methods of advocating (or self-advocating) for disability-focused inclusion/awareness from within places that do not prioritize access/welcome/inclusion of persons with disabilities. The presentation will address common, though often unspoken, reasons for ignoring the needs of the disabled community and will offer specific and practical means for advocates and self-advocates (including ministers who feel unsupported by their congregations and folks with disabilities who are worn out by ineffective advocacy). Participants will leave with a clearer path for change in their own institutions by 'working smarter, not harder.'

Presenter: **Rev. Topher Endress** is a commissioned minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), currently serving as the Minister of Education at University Christian Church in Austin, TX. Topher received his MDiv from Vanderbilt Divinity School in 2015, where he focused

on Disability Theology, church-based advocacy, and drinking copious amounts of coffee. Formerly, he led a ministry for adults with IDD in Nashville, equipping them to be self-advocates and full participants in their own faith communities. He is currently leading a year-long special project in disability inclusion, theology, and awareness through University Christian in hopes that they can help churches across Central Texas begin the process of welcoming the disability community.

Why Leadership Matters in Faith Community Inclusion: How You Can Support Belonging!

The National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities at the University of Delaware and the Ruderman Family Foundation created the Jewish Leadership Institute on Disabilities and Inclusion. Training faith community leaders has proven to be an effective and important approach, supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to direct their own participation as members of their faith communities. The Institute's ongoing research on the efficacy of leadership training in this field highlights the impact on individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their faith communities as well as the unique challenges and opportunities to guide, mentor and support leaders in faith communities. Caitlin Bailey and Shelly Christensen will provide you with insights and tools to lead your own organization and communities.

Presenters: Shelly Christensen, MA, FAAIDD. Co-founder & faculty Jewish Leadership Institute on Disabilities & Inclusion, international consultant for faith community inclusion, author Jewish Community Guide on Inclusion of People with Disabilities. Immediate Past pres. AAIDD Religion & Spirituality Div. **Caitlin Bailey, PhD,** Director of Research and Evaluation, National Leadership Consortium on Developmental Disabilities, University of Delaware.

Reflections on Embodiment and Disability Advocacy

How do our understandings of and relationships to our own bodies impact how we carry out our advocacy, support, and activism around disability? In this presentation, we will hear from 3 presenters who identify differently in terms of disability: one identifies as a person with a disability, one person has a chronic illness that will eventually result in physical disability, and one person does not identify as a person with a disability (but does experience body stigma in other ways). Through personal narrative and examples, as well as drawing upon our own scholarly research around disability and embodiment, we will explore ways our own experiences of embodiment - with all the accompanying joys, limits, needs, and theologies - inform how we do disability work and advocacy (in terms of physical disability, but also intellectual disability). Implicit will be ideas for reflection for everyone doing disability advocacy, to pay attention to our own embodiment and experience, and to think about how that connects to the work we do - and how to use our own experiences to make our work deeper and more helpful.

Presenters: Rosalba B. Rios currently works as an MFT Intern for Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services and works primarily with low income children and families. Rosalba has previously worked in the area of disability services within higher education and has a passion for disability advocacy. She has earned a Bachelor's of Science in Studio Art at Biola University, an M.A in Counseling from California State University, Fullerton and an M.A in Theological Studies from Fuller Theological Seminary. **Devan Stahl** is an Assistant Professor of Clinical Ethics at Michigan State University. Dr. Stahl teaches medical ethics and medical humanities in the College of Human Medicine and performs clinical ethics consultation services throughout the state of Michigan. Dr. Stahl's main areas of research are in disability ethics, religion and spirituality in healthcare, and clinical ethics. Devan earned her Ph.D. in Health Care Ethics at Saint Louis University and her M.Div. at Vanderbilt University. **Bethany McKinney Fox** is Director of Student Services and Adjunct Professor of Christian Ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary. In her administrative role at Fuller she runs the Access Services Office providing supports for students with disabilities and working on broader campus culture around disability issues. Dr. Fox also teaches and trains faith leaders and communities about theological and practical visions for including people with disabilities. She earned her PhD in Christian Ethics from Fuller Theological Seminary, and her MDiv from Columbia Theological Seminary. She likes doing improv comedy and recording silly songs with her husband in their band Toucan Panda.

“The Gift of Being”: How is North America to Respond?

“The Gift of Being” is a new theological statement of the World Council of Churches (WCC) as of June 2016. The document is the result of consultations of the Ecumenical Disability Advocacy Network (EDAN) of the WCC. The new document represents a collaboration of theologians with disabilities, other persons with disabilities, as well as scholars. This workshop will offer a brief overview of the document from one of the document's consultants and editors. Workshop participants will be invited to respond to the document in the style of a theological consultation. Workshop participants will also be invited to brainstorm and network together on ways that might present/introduce the document to local churches. How can those of us in North America use the ethical and theological fruits of this document for religious education, worship, theological development, future scholarly work, and further theological and ethical reflections on disability in the North American context? Participants are encouraged to read “The Gift of Being” prior to the workshop; the document can be found on-line at <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/central-committee/2016/the-gift-of-being>

Presenters: Rev. Kelli Parrish Lucas is North American Coordinator for the Ecumenical Disability Advocacy Network (EDAN). She participated in EDAN consultation on “The Gift of Being” and presented the document to EDAN Regional Coordinators. She is clergy with disability currently serving as Chair of United Church of Christ Disabilities Ministries, Associate Pastor at Altadena Community Church, and a hospice chaplain. **Sharon R. McCart** is serving in her fourth year as Chair of the DisAbility Ministries Committee of The United Methodist Church. She has ten years of experience in teaching children with disabilities and three years of serving as a church pastor.

Intellectual Disabilities

Jean Vanier Interview Dec 2016

This past December a team, which included Paul Kennedy a long-time CBC Radio Broadcaster, meet for two days with Jean Vanier in which we explore the question of Faith, disability and society. The workshop would be a viewing of approx. 45 – 60 minutes with a facilitated discussion lead by Dr. Neil Cudney.

Presenter: Dr. Neil Cudney B.A., M.Div., D.Min., is the Director of Organizational and Spiritual Life for Christian Horizons. He has served in the organization for over 20 years. He regularly lectures, writes and speaks on topics of disability, theology, organizational culture and conflict management. He has worked a variety of positions from direct support to executive leadership.

Dancing Close to God: The Spiritual Needs and Desires of Christians with Intellectual Disabilities

The voices of adults with intellectual disabilities are all too often nonexistent or disregarded within the faith community. This workshop will present the findings of a recently conducted qualitative study in which adults with intellectual disabilities were interviewed about their self-perceived spiritual needs and role in the Christian church body. The participants in this study indicated a definite desire to have a meaningful role in religious life. The workshop presenters will discuss the self-identified needs of the study participants and key points of learning from the research. Drawing on a Christian theological framework, the presenters reflect on the study conclusions and suggest practical implications for faith communities.

Presenters: Abigail Roe recently completed her MEd in special education at Southeastern University. Her undergraduate honors thesis *Dancing Close to God: The Spiritual Needs of Christian Adults with Intellectual Disabilities and How the Church Can Help* gave a voice to adults with intellectual disabilities to discuss their own self-identified needs and perceptions of church. This project fueled Abigail's passion for seeing all people meaningfully included in the church. Abigail's current research focuses on the impact of religious mentorship for youth with intellectual disabilities. **Dr. Joyce Harth** is associate professor of education at Southeastern University. She has 10 years of experience working with children and adults with disabilities. In addition to her experience as a special educator, Dr. Harth worked as a parent educator and provided early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities from migrant populations in the north Florida region. Dr. Harth's areas of research and interest include the provision of special education services to students with intellectual disabilities, working with English language learners with disabilities and the early literacy development of young English language learners with disabilities.

Discovering what it means to human: The contribution made by people with intellectual disability in relationships and community

L'Arche values the understanding that all people have value and are gifts to others and their community. In community, the presence and gifts of people with an intellectual disability are

acknowledged and valued and spoken about. However, the actual contribution that people with an intellectual disability make is often described in vague and general ways and that can trivialize such statements. In this paper, we would like to make concrete the ways in which people with an intellectual disability have been teachers and contributed to our lives and the communities with which we are familiar. We will include stories told to us by others which help understand that contribution and great variety of ways in which that occurs. The paper will address the deeper issue of the impact of those contributions, not just the instrumental value. We will try to unpack Jean Vanier's declaration about people with intellectual disability "helping me discover who I am, what my deepest needs are, and what it means to be human." The importance of understanding the value of "weakness" and vulnerability in community is to our disadvantage.

Presenters: **Dr. David Treanor** is the National Leader for L'Arche Oceania. He previously lived as an Assistant in L'Arche in Ireland and Australia. He was active in welcomed people with an intellectual disability to first move from an institution to their local community in government and non-government agencies. He has managed Disability Community Teams; Community Access Services; Respite Services and worked in research and evaluation. He has qualifications in social work, social sciences, public administration and a PhD in philosophy. His areas of academic interest are: aging; community living; communication; ethics, innovation and the philosophy of personalism. **Rob Nicholls** is the Church Engagement Manager at CBM Australia and Chair of L'Arche Melbourne. Part of his work is networking and training for the Luke14 initiative. Rob worked in leadership roles in community services for 30 years, including Wesley Mission Melbourne, before moving to a combination of working in the church as a pastor and training and coaching consultancy. He took up the role at CBM in 2010 to follow his two passions of the church and people who live with disability.

Accessible and Inclusive Worship

Enacting Grace: Accessibility in the Spaces and Texts of Worship

How we understand and perform accessible worship? Justin and Lisa will help participants answer this question in two key areas of Christian worship: space and text. Beginning with an exploration of key themes in disability theology, this workshop will open wide the concept of accessibility and invite participants to imagine creative means of integrating disability and accessibility into the spatial and textual aspects of worship. After offering a framework for constructing accessible spaces and texts in worship, Justin and Lisa will guide an extended discussion of the specific worship design issues that workshop participants bring to the session out of their past experiences and/or current worshipping communities.

Presenters: **Rev. Justin Hancock** is an ordained Deacon in the United Methodist Church and works as the Prior of the Epworth Project, a network of intentional Christian communities under the umbrella of the Missional Wisdom Foundation located in North Texas. **Lisa Hancock** has a Masters in Sacred Music and a Masters in Theological Studies and is currently a PhD student in Systematic Theology at SMU. Lisa's research focus is disability theology. Justin and

Lisa are also the co-founders of The Julian Way, an initiative of the Missional Wisdom Foundation focusing on ministry and communal engagement with individuals and families with disabilities.

So All May Worship: Best Practices for an Inclusive Worshipping Community

For decades, churches have explored ways to share the gospel with people affected by disability. This type of ministry has often been a separate ministry, apart from the mainstream activities of the church. In this workshop, we aim to establish a new understanding of ministry with people affected by disability, as one which views the church as an inclusive community in itself. Together, we will explore the Biblical roots of what it means to be an inclusive community of worshippers, and explore models of inclusion that can be employed by congregations of all sizes. It is our goal to equip participants for leading inclusive ministry within their churches, as well as developing partnerships with public agencies to provide spiritual enrichment to people affected by disabilities who do not have the opportunity to attend church. With Jones' recent experience gained from working at the Centre for Sensory Studies in Montreal, we will highlight how sensory stimulation can be incorporated into worship services to allow people to experience God through the senses. Throughout, we include examples of tangible ways for people to encounter the Word of God and all other aspects of worship, including participation in the sacraments.

Presenters: **Zach Holler** holds a B.S. in Rehabilitation Services from Wright State University and is currently pursuing his Master of Divinity from United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. He is currently serving at Sulphur Grove UMC, leading the church to build an inclusive community in which all may worship. **Kirsty Jones** is a research associate with the Kirby Laing Institute for Christian Ethics and holds an Mphil in Old Testament at the University of Cambridge, with a research interest in Disability in the Old Testament and Biblical Ethics of Disability. She combines academic work with care work in residential and private settings, and is particularly interested in the intersection between sensory studies, biblical studies and Christian worship.